THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION TEN YEARS LATER: WHAT HAS BEEN ITS GLOBAL IMPACT?

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AUGUST 1989

MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE
1761 N ST., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

Introductory Note

This Occasional Paper is the result of a conference held in Washington, DC on February 3-4, 1989 on "The Iranian Revolution Ten Years Later: What Has Been its Global Impact?" The conference was sponsored by The Middle East Institute and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington and the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London.

Ten years after the Ayatollah Khomeni returned in triumph to Tehran, top international experts who participated in the conference were asked to assess the world-wide impact of the Iranian revolution, examining *inter alia* such questions as:

—Has the Iranian revolution influenced Islamic revivalism elsewhere or is Islamic resurgence in other countries due to indigenous factors?

—Has the Iranian experience shaped the politics, economics and cultures of other countries?

—What have been the repercussions of the Iranian revolution on US government and international institutions?

In this paper Dr. John L. Esposito, Director of the Center for International Studies and Professor of Religion at the College of the Holy Cross and Dr. James Piscatori, Associate Professor of Middle East Studies at SAIS, summarize the conclusions of the conference—which covered the Muslim world from Sub-Sahara Africa to Southeast Asia. In preparing this summary, the authors have drawn with appreciation upon the assessments of the following individuals, who delivered papers at the Washington conference: Mumtaz Ahmad, Shahrough Akhavi, Gerard Chaliand, Hermann F. Eilts, David E. Long, Lisa Anderson, Congressman Lee Hamilton, Fred R. von der Mehden, Ibrahim Gambari, John O. Voll, Cesar Adib Majul, R.K. Ramazani, Farhang Rajaee, Nikki R. Keddie, Gary Sick, Kenneth D. Taylor, Martha Olcott, Augustus Richard Norton, and Olivier Roy.

The paper also includes Dr. Esposito's and Dr. Piscatori's views on what they consider to be a number of myths which have hampered American understanding of revolutionary Iran's domestic foreign policies and their observations on policy perspectives.

The authors wish to express their indebtedness to Jeanette P. Esposito, John O. Voll, Ambassador William Rugh and Stephen R. Grummon for their useful and constructive suggestions on a draft of this paper.

conservative and moderate, ill apply to this situation.

For another thing, the extent and manner in which the Iranian revolutionary example has resonated in other Muslim states depends primarily on the local country situation. It is true that on the level of ideas and ideology, the writings of two Iranian leaders, Shariati and the Ayatollah Khomeini, have been widely circulated and have affected Islamic theological and political thinking throughout the Muslim world. But beyond that important generalization, almost all other analysis of the revolution's impact on other countries must be on a country or at least a regional basis to be at all meaningful.

In two countries—Lebanon and Bahrain—the revolutionary regime in Tehran has intervened directly and tangibly—with rather inconclusive results. In a larger number of countries, Iran's impact has come about primarily because of the example it has provided for local Muslim activists. In this context, this paper briefly examines the situations in Egypt, Tunisia, Nigeria, Turkey, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. We then examine the Iranian reaction to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, by Salman Rushdie.

The principal conclusions to be drawn from the foregoing are that western analysts and policy-makers should beware of generalizations and stereotypes when dealing with the highly nuanced and many-faceted conditions of contemporary Iran. As far as relations between the United States and Iran are concerned, for the short term the outlook is bleak. However, there is a basic congruity of interests between the two countries that is likely to surface over the longer term.

Background

Contemporary Iran began the first decade of its existence with the twin goals of institutionalizing its revolution, and exporting it.

The first goal was largely achieved, and in fairly short order. A constitution was adopted for the new Islamic Republic of Iran, with an elected parliamentary form of government under the guidance of Islamic law. The Ayatollah Khomeini became the *velayat-i-faqih*, the ultimate legal authority, the supreme religio-political guide for state and society. Lay leaders Mehdi Bazargan and Abol Hasan Bani-Sadr provided only a relatively brief transition; in 1981 the clergy moved quickly and effectively to consolidate control of the government and its major institutions, and to suppress domestic opposition.

The result has been a significant transformation in Iranian society. A new ruling

elite, consisting of clergy and clerically approved sons of the revolution, controls the government and bureaucracy. Its members are no longer primarily from the urban, westernized middle class but are drawn from a spectrum that is broader geographically, economically, educationally, and socially. Economically, the state exercises greater control over the economy, ostensibly to fulfill its revolutionary goal to create a more socially just society for the disinherited or oppressed masses. The government, having taken over banking, insurance, foreign trade, and major industries, has paid off its foreign debt and created an independent economy, less beholden to foreign investment and capital. In fact as well as in theory, the revolution has profoundly altered the political and social landscape of Iran.

From its earliest days, the Islamic Republic of Iran has proclaimed the second goal—the export of the revolution—as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. No other aspect of the Iranian revolution has captured as much media attention and struck as much fear in the hearts of western and Muslim governments. Militants and their critics alike have tended toward hyperbole when discussing Iranian revolutionary activities; both the acrimonious diatribes of Iran and the overreaction of its opponents have made it difficult to distinguish rhetoric from reality.

The Iranian revolution occurred at a time when conditions in much of the rest of the Islamic world were particularly favorable to its cause. The overwhelming Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, particularly the loss of Jerusalem—the third-holiest city of Islam—gave rise to Muslim introspection and the perception that disaster had befallen Muslims because of deviation from the true path. The 1973 war, which was fought in the name of Islam and led initially to Israeli reverses on the battlefield, and the related oil embargo went far towards restoring a sense of self-confidence among Muslims. Both events confirmed the general view that the reassertion of Islam would lead to social and political, as well as spiritual, advances. In fact, much of the Muslim world experienced a resurgence of Islam in private and public life. Greater attention to religious observances (prayer, fasting, religious dress, family values) was accompanied by a reassertion of Islam in state and society. Islamic rhetoric, symbols, and actors became prominent fixtures in Muslim politics, often used by rulers to buttress nationalism or by their opponents to challenge state ideologies which had secular and western roots. A pervasive Muslim backlash against the West both reflected and reinforced a sense of pride in past glories and a quest for identity that emphasized authenticity and a return to, or reappropriation of, indigenous values. Whatever the vast differences among Muslim societies, a return to the past meant a reclaiming of their Islamic history and heritage.

There was much in Iran's revolutionary experience and ideology that resonated

with such revivalist themes and concerns in other Muslim societies. Most important, it was an *Islamic* revolution, standing in sharp contrast to the Shah's White Revolution, which had been widely seen as benefiting only a privileged modern urban elite, while compromising Iran's independence by fostering dependence on the West.

The Islamic revivalist disenchantment with westernization had been offset by the newfound pride, power, and economic success symbolized by the oil embargo of 1973. But it was Iran that gave the modern Muslim world its first successful "Islamic" political revolution. That revolution was fought in the name of Islam, with its traditional battle cry ("Allahu Akbar"); it was inspired by Shii revolutionary ideology and symbolism and directed by its own particular combination of clerical and Islamically-oriented lay leadership. Sunnis and Shia alike could revel in a decade which saw a greater emphasis on Islamic identity and practice accompanied by signs of the restoration of Muslim pride and power in a world long dominated by foreign superpowers. Moreover, the Ayatollah Khomeini offered the Iranian experience and agenda as a guide to the political and ideological transformation of the world-wide Muslim community *(ummah)*, which was to unite all Muslims in a political and cultural struggle against West and East. Iran alone had won its struggle and, now victorious, seemed poised to implement its principles at home and promote them abroad.

Islamic activists, Sunni as well as Shia, could and frequently did identify with many of Iran's Islamic ideological principles. Among these were: (1) the reassertion of Islam as a total way of life, a comprehensive blueprint for state and society; (2) the belief that the adoption of the western, secular model of separation of church and state was the cause of the political, military, economic, and social ills of Muslim societies; (3) the firm conviction that the restoration of Muslim power and success required a return to Islam, the divinely mandated alternative to western capitalism and Soviet-inspired Marxism and socialism; (4) the reintroduction of the shariah (Islamic law) as the sacred blueprint for the good society–a moral and more socially just community of believers; and (5) the willingness to struggle (jihad) against all odds, to suffer and to gain martyrdom (shahada) if necessary in the path of God.

Mythologizing the Revolution

A series of myths have hampered our understanding of Iranian politics in general and the global impact of the Iranian revolution in particular. Four have equally affected policy makers, academic analysts, and journalists.

First, it has been widely accepted that the Iranian revolution is a narrowly sectarian, Shii revolution. From its earliest days, however, the revolution has

deliberately projected a universalist image and harbored universalist aspirations. The Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, has emphasized that the revolution is rooted in the common tenets of Islam and has proclaimed its relevance for all the world's oppressed. This vision is embodied in Iran's constitution:

> The Islamic Republic of Iran is to base its overall policy on the coalition and unity of the Islamic nation. Furthermore, it should exert continuous effort until political, economic, and cultural unity is realized in the Islamic world. (Principle 11)

In the early aftermath of the revolution, many Islamic student activists, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, looked to Iran as an example. Thus, the Sunni students of the Islamic Association (Al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya) at Cairo University declared that "The revolution of the Iranian people...is worthy of our deep study so that we may extract the lesson, learn from it, derive incentives and benefit from the study"[1]. Indeed, at the elite and popular levels the revolution was scarcely perceived as solely a Shii victory. Many Muslims regarded it as the triumph of Islam over Satanic forces, as well as a triumph of the Third World over American neo-imperialism.

This is not to suggest, however, that the Sunni-Shii tension is entirely absent. In societies in which significant Shii minorities feel deprived, it would be only natural for them to feel a kinship with a country in which Shiism is predominant, and it would be only natural for the Sunni majority to find less attraction in Iran. Thus, the Sunni mujahidin in Afghanistan have looked to Pakistan while Shii groups have had closer ties to Iran.

The *second myth* proposes confusion and disorganization as the defining characteristics of Iran's revolution. While all revolutions tend to strike observers as chaotic, regular patterns of social and political behavior soon establish themselves. Even in the midst of the disorder that followed the fall of so centralized and pervasive a regime as that of the Pahlavis, basic institutions of state and society were created or reconstituted. As early as January 1979, revolutionary committees (komitehs) appeared to regulate basic social services as the old state disintegrated. In March 1979, only one month after the return of the Ayatollah to Iran, a referendum was approved that replaced the monarchy with an Islamic republic. In August, a Council of Experts was elected to prepare a new constitution, which was subsequently ratified in November. In January 1980, presidential elections were held, and in the following March and May, the

[1] "Lessons from Iran " [1979] in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.246.

Islamic Republican Party won a majority of seats in the new parliament. The revolution continued to institutionalize itself with the creation of a revolutionary court system, later incorporated within the Ministry of Justice, and a clerical supervisory body, the Council of Guardians[2].

In contrast to the myth of a chaotic revolution, the *third myth* holds that the Iranian revolution is all too predictable. It is assumed that because the ideology which guides the regime is based on Islamic doctrine, policy prescriptions are predetermined and clear. In fact, Islamic beliefs are subject to a variety of interpretations, as the differences between the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Paris-educated intellectual Ali Shariati demonstrate. Even among clergy with similar backgrounds and training, significant differences of opinion exist, as the disagreement between Khomeini and the more senior Ayatollah Shariatmadari over the nature of clerical rule testifies. In addition, parliamentary debates often reflect significant differences of interpretation. For example, in recent years the parliament and Council of Guardians have been at loggerheads over the issue of land reform—the sanctity of private property versus state expropriation and redistribution in the name of Islamic social justice.

This myth is also deceptive since it ignores the inherent fluidity and inevitable pragmatism of all revolutions. The Iranian relationship with the Soviet Union is indicative. One might have expected that Islam's antipathy to Marxist atheism and Khomeini's hostility towards the superpowers ("Neither East nor West") would have precluded relations with the Soviet Union. The reality, however, was more complex. From 1979 to mid-1983, at a time when relations with the United States had collapsed, the Iranians maintained correct, if cool, diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, purchased Soviet weapons (via North Korea), and tolerated the Marxist Tudeh Party at home. The seemingly unyielding holy war with Iraq also illustrates this point. Although Ayatollah Khomeini repeatedly insisted that there would be no cessation of fighting until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad, several leading clerics often demurred as reverses on the battlefield occurred. Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Speaker of Parliament, could at times be just as adamant as Khomeini and he eventually succeeded in inducing him to accept the cease-fire with Iraq— a decision "more deadly than taking poison"[3] when it became clear that neither the economy nor public morale would support further sacrifices.

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[2]Shahrough Akhavi, "Iran: Implementation of an Islamic State" in John L. Esposito (ed.) Islam in Asia: Religion, Politics, and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 32.

[3]The Independent (London), July 21, 1988.

The internal debate over the resolution of the Iran-Iraq war belies a *fourth and final myth:* that there are no Iranian moderates. This characterization became conventional as a result of the hostage crisis of 1979-81 in which the image of unreasonable, armed mullahs was reinforced by the American government's inability to negotiate with a regime unwilling or unable to prevail on student militants. This perception was reconfirmed by the attempt to sell arms for hostages during the Iran-Contra Affair. The failure of this policy appeared to most critics to be explained best by the absence of any real moderates rather than by the misguided nature of the policy. Yet, this self-serving mythologizing as to the composition of the Iranian elite obscures the complex reality of shifting factions within a constantly changing environment. The division between radicals and moderates is a gross simplification; even Khomeini himself sometimes appeared "leftist" and sometimes "rightist". With regard to land reform, for example, he has pointedly cited a Prophetic tradition to the effect that wealth must be shared with the poor. But, at the same time, he has not rescinded existing laws protecting private property, and, cognizant of his bazaari supporters, he has not mandated greater government control of the economy. Whereas factionalism is endemic to most political systems, it is particularly pronounced in revolutionary situations in which coalitions vary according to issues.

The foregoing myths have tended to mislead current western thinking about the impact the Iranian revolution has had outside its own borders. The belief that the revolution is quintessentially Shii, for example, encouraged the assumption that the Shia generally would be more receptive to Iranian revolutionary ideas than the Sunnis. The attempted coup d'etat in December 1980 in Bahrain — with its majority Shii population — seemed to support just such an assumption; yet even here, there was no general uprising. In Iraq, the Shia, who constitute at least 60% of the population and the majority of the military rank and file, resisted the repeated calls of the Ayatollah to regard the war as a Shii holy war rather than a nationalist struggle. The majority of the Shia in Kuwait and in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia also proved unresponsive to sectarian appeals.

The presumption of Iranian ideological clarity has similarly bedevilled western understanding of the subject. This has been true despite evidence that Iranian leaders themselves are uncertain, or at least divided, as to how to proceed—even on as basic an issue as whether the revolution is to be exported primarily by example or by the sword. Khomeini himself has advocated a variety of means: cultural transformation, religious propagation, mass communications, and armed struggle. At times, he has said: "We want Islam to spread everywhere...but this does not mean that we intend to export it by the bayonet." Yet, at other times, he has said: "If governments submit and behave in accordance with Islamic tenets, support them; if not, fight them without fear of anyone."[4] Another area

of basic uncertainty can be seen in the debate over whether primacy should be given to building the revolution at home or exporting it abroad. In addition to ambiguities such as these, Iranian decision makers have not been unaware of the political constraints on their freedom of action. As in other policy areas, Iranians have demonstrated flexibility in pursuing their goals. Despite years of calling for the overthrow of Gulf regimes, they saw benefits in maintaining regular contacts — even in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war — with these regimes. Since the cease-fire of August 1988, they have notably moved to improve their relations with the smaller countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Impact of the Iranian Revolution on Other Muslim States

Iran's impact on other Muslim states has depended at least as much on conditions in the particular state and region concerned as on Iran's own efforts. Any analysis such as this, therefore, must depend primarily on a country-by-country, or at least a regional examination, and take into account such factors as the composition of local elites, the nature of indigenous Islamic and protest movements, and other significant national and regional factors. Having said this, however, certain broad generalizations can be made at the outset.

Iran has played a major role as a *direct agent* for revolutionary change in only a very few other Muslim states. Lebanon, and to a lesser degree Bahrein, are the most significant examples, and will be examined in the pages that follow.

In most Islamic countries, revolutionary Iran's influence has been primarily that of an *exemplar* rather than a direct participant. This was particularly true during the early period after the revolution, when both Sunnis and Shia across the Islamic world were applauding the courage and faith of the revolution, and Iran was equated with Islamic revivalism and fundamentalism. Iran's example served as a catalyst to local Muslim activists whose own grievances now seemed neither unique nor insurmountable. Spontaneous political outbursts occurred in such diverse places as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Bahrain. Representatives of Muslim organizations from the Middle East as well as South and Southeast Asia travelled to Teheran immediately after the revolution. Anwar Sadat's support of the Shah and denunciation of the Ayatollah Khomeini as a lunatic

[4]Imam Khomeini, Sahifeye Nur (Teheran: Vezarate Ershad, 1364/1985), Vol. 18, p. 129 and Vol. 17, p. 141, as cited in Farhang Rajaee, "Iranian Ideology and Worldview and the Export of Revolution," unpublished manuscript 1989, p. 14-15.

was the exception that proved the rule. Even the nervous amirs of the Gulf remained cautiously silent in the face of a popular cause.

Some Muslim countries have demonstrated that Iran can also play the role of *exemplar in reverse*. The governments of Tunisia and Indonesia, for example, have sought to discredit Muslim activists within their countries by associating them with the excesses of the revolutionary Iranian regime.

The most pervasive way in which revolutionary Iran has influenced the Muslim world is on the level of *ideas and ideology*. Characteristic of the Islamic revival has been the world-wide dissemination of the writings of such Sunni ideologues as the Egyptians Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, the Pakistani Abul Ala Mawdudi, and the Indian Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi. As a result of the revolution, the writings of the two ideologues, Khomeini and Shariati, have been widely translated and distributed throughout the Muslim — and indeed the non-Muslim — world. Shariati, in particular, has gained wide currency from Egypt to Malaysia. Egyptian militants have claimed Shariati as one of their inspirations, as have Tunisian activists.[5] In Malaysia and Indonesia, the writings of Shariati are widely available, and such influential journals as Prisma and Dakwah have devoted considerable attention to his thought.[6] As a consequence, Shariati's ideas, and to a lesser extent Khomeini's, have influenced students and intellectuals as well as political activists. Whether or not there is a direct connection between ideas and oppositional activity, it is certainly true that the post-revolutionary generation of Muslims across the world accepts that Islam provides a blueprint for political and social reform.

Direct Iranian Influence

Lebanon:

The Shia community of Lebanon, essentially apolitical until after the Second World War, has gradually become politicized since that time. Beginning with the economic and social changes of the 1950's and especially of the 1960's, rural Shia migrated to Beirut and were ghettoized, a Shii professional middle class emerged, and new religious leaders, such as Musa Sadr, vied for power in the Shii community with feudal landed families. The Iranian-born and -educated Musa Sadr reinterpreted Shii religious symbolism to support a militant movement of

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[5] Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "The Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups," International Journal of Middle East Studies, 12 (December 1980), p. 435.

[6] Fred R. von der Mehden, "Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic Movements and the Iranian Connection," unpublished manuscript 1989.

social and political reform (the Movement of the Disinherited, *Harakat al-Mahrumin*) which paralleled Khomeini's interpretation of revolutionary Islam during his exile from 1965 to early 1979. Out of this grew the milita AMAL.

Events escalated significantly in Lebanon in 1978. The Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon resulted in loss of many Shii lives and the destruction of their homes and property. The disappearance of Musa Sadr in September of that year — probably in Qaddafi's Libya — breathed new life into the Shii movement. His disappearance fit nicely into the traditional Shii doctrines of martyrdom and the occultation of the Hidden Imam. At such a favorable moment, the Iranian revolution made its appearance, reinforcing the religio-political legacy of Musa Sadr. The revolution, a successful movement for social protest and change, became witness to the power of Shii ideology to overturn injustice and overcome oppression. In the popular mind, Imam Musa Sadr was transformed into a religious hero and paradigm, a worthy descendent of the martyred grandson of the Prophet — the paramount Shii hero — and of the Hidden Twelfth Imam who is in seclusion but will return. Thus, for the Lebanese Shia the Iranian revolution acted to verify the validity of the Shii model of resistance and ultimate triumph. For many, it would come to serve as an exemplar for action.

From 1978 to 1982, AMAL under the leadership of Nabih Berri (b. 1938) dominated the Shii stage, yet opposition soon began to appear within the community. Under Berri, AMAL functioned as a Shii nationalist organization, pursuing full parity for Lebanon's disinherited Shii within Lebanon's multi-confessional framework. It did not speak of Shii dominance or of an Islamic state, but pursued a pragmatic policy with Lebanon's Christian dominated government and western powers, including the United States.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacres at Shatila and Sabra in 1982 (by Christian Phalangist forces with Israeli complicity) became another turning point in Lebanon's war-torn politics and led to the radicalization of Shii politics. Berri's accommodating attitude towards the Lebanese government and the United States discredited AMAL in the eyes of more alienated and militant Shia, who regarded the government as unrepresentative, intransigent, and pro-Israeli. These elements were particularly antagonized by Berri's willingness to form an alliance (the Committee of National Salvation) with the Christian Phalangist President of Lebanon, Bashir Gemayel, and the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt. As a result, with the assistance of Iran, radical Islamic organizations like Islamic AMAL, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad emerged as contending forces in the Beqaa Valley.

Charging that Berri had collaborated with Israel, Husayn Musawi (b. 1945), a member of AMAL's command council, broke with it and rejected its secular

nationalism; following Iran's example, he called for an Islamic republic for Lebanon and created a party called Islamic AMAL. Hezbollah (the Party of God) had been born in Baalbeck in the wake of the Iranian revolution, and had come to prominence with the support of Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran). Pro-Iranian Shii clerics, who provided a critical core of leadership and whose mosques became centers for recruitment, training, and mobilization, were joined by students and professionals, increasingly radicalized by their perception of a deteriorating political situation and the failure of moderation. Ideologically, the ground work had been laid by such twentieth century Shii thinkers as Lebanon's Muhammad Mahdi Shamsiddin, Musa al-Sadr, and Shaykh Muhammad Fadlallah as well as Iraq's Baqir al-Sadr and the Ayatollah Khomeini. All had been engaged in a powerful reinterpretation of Shiism. They transformed the central Shii religious paradigm of the seventh century martyrdom of the Imam Husayn from one of faithful remembrance and anticipation of deliverance upon the return of the Hidden Imam (who had gone into occultation in A.D. 874) into an activist ideology of resistance and protest.

The unfolding of events in Iran resulted in an explicit call for an "Islamic revolution," under the guidance of the ulama, against political oppression, imperialism, and social injustice. Hezbollah's certitude of ultimate victory is embodied in its motto ("the Party of God will surely be the victors"), taken from the Quran (58: 22), and historically verified by the successful example of Iran's revolution. Tyranny and imperialism, they believe, are not to be silently suffered, but are to be actively opposed through demonstrations, strikes, and force. Islamic activists in Lebanon, as in Iran, have regarded their condition to be so desperate and precarious as to justify armed struggle (jihad) in their self-defense. They perceive it as the battle of the Party of God against the Party of Satan (Quran 58: 19-20), whoever that might be — Christian militias, Israeli forces, or western governments.

Meanwhile, posters of the Ayatollah adorned the houses and streets. Hezbollah publications (in particular the masthead of their newspaper *Al-Ahd*) were adorned with Khomeini's picture, bore the implicitly transnational inscription, "the Islamic revolution in Lebanon," and faithfully reported his words. For example, after 400 pilgrims were killed during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in 1987, *Al-Ahd* noted that the Commander Imam (*al-imam al-qaid*), or leader of the faith, proclaimed that all Muslims were obligated to take revenge on the Saudi ruling house.

While Shii Iran's revolutionary example provided inspiration and guidance, the Khomeini government supplied more tangible support. In addition to indoctrination materials, and to arms and training that Iranian Revolutionary Guards were furnishing Hezbollah's militia, Iran gave Hezbollah substantial financial

and political assistance, aid that has been crucial to Hezbollah's political-military as well as its social activities. These latter include the operation of schools, clinics, hospitals, farms, and housing cooperatives, as well as the construction of mosques and repair of war-torn homes. Estimates of financial assistance have ranged from $10 million to as high as $30 million per month in late 1987 and early 1988.

Such monetary support has dropped dramatically since the cease-fire in the Gulf war, as Iran has been forced to turn to its own economic reconstruction. In addition, a shift in relations with Syria has diminished Iranian direct influence in Lebanon. For a number of years, the Iranian embassy in Damascus had served as a center of strategic planning for acts of political violence in Lebanon, such as attacks on western embassies and the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. But relations between Iran and Syria, always based on the thin reed of a shared anti-Iraqi anxiety, have been strained since 1985 as a result of open conflict between Hezbollah, primarily supported by Iran, and AMAL, primarily supported by Syria. One further indication that Iran directly influences but does not simply determine the course of Lebanese politics is the attitude of Shaykh Fadlallah, the spiritual guide of Hezbollah. While recognizing the role of Iran as a model of Islamic revolution, he has acknowledged nevertheless that an Islamic republic must remain a "goal," which for the foreseeable future is "impossible."[7]

Bahrain:

Bahrain provides another example of tangible Iranian efforts to create new political conditions that would usher in Islamic revolution. During the 1970's, the Iranian Hojjat al-Islam Hadi Mudarrisi created in Bahrain a network of support for Khomeini, then still in exile. Soon after Khomeini's return to Iran, several hundred Shii Bahrainis participated in a public demonstration in favor of Iran's revolution, and violent confrontations between the Shia and authorities occurred in August 1979. Mudarrisi, who had been expelled from Bahrain in 1980, made regular broadcast appeals from Teheran for an uprising against the ruling dynasty. In December 1981, the government thwarted an attempted coup and arrested more than seventy members of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, a movement inspired by Mudarrisi and financed by Iran.

The fact remains that despite this Iranian connection, local forces were the primary actors. Indeed, all of the conspirators were Arabs. Thus we see again that Iran's influence, even when applied directly, has proven to be less than decisive, and certainly less decisive than local factors.

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[7]Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, "Islam and Violence in Political Reality," Middle East Insight, Vol. 4, Nos. 4&5 (1986), p. 10.

Iran as Exemplar; Confirmation of Pre-existing Trends

In a second group of Islamic states, the example of the Iranian revolution has reinforced existing Islamic opposition to regimes, and possibly increased the pace of oppositional activities, without significant tangible intervention by the Iranian government.

Egypt:

Anwar Sadat tried to use Islam to bolster his political legitimacy, but instead produced an Islamic backlash. The Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic student organizations were increasingly critical of his open-door economic policy (*infitah*), his reform of Muslim family law, his support for the Shah of Iran, and, later, his advocacy of the Camp David Accords. New activist groups increasingly resented Sadat's appropriation of Islam, and soon radical challenges to the regime occurred. Opposition to the peace treaty with Israel steadily mounted, and once the Iranian revolution was in place, groups like the Muslim Brotherhood rejected the official Islamic establishment's endorsement of the treaty and called on Egyptians to "follow the example of Iran and wage holy war against Israel."[8]

The Muslim Brotherhood's enthusiasm for the Iranian revolution waxed and waned over time, but an initial tendency within the movement unhesitatingly endorsed it:

> [The Iranian revolution will] turn political theories and contemporary political forces on their heads...[it is] a matchless, powerful, and vital example of the Islamic revolution...and the important thing is not to put our hands at our sides and wait.[9]

Indeed, in the early years after the revolution, radical groups, student organizations, and members of the Islamic left all studied the revolution closely and drew the lesson that Egypt too could radically transform its political order if only there were a cohesive vanguard to propagate the message and mobilize the masses.

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[8]Middle East International, 95 (March 16, 1979), p.2.

[9]Muhammad Abd al-Rahim Anbar, Nahwa Thawrah Islamiyya (Cairo: Matbat Abirin, 1979), pp. 101-102, 104, 106, as cited in Shahrough Akhavi, "The Impact of the Iranian Revolution on Egypt," unpublished manuscript 1989, p. 13.

Tunisia:

Bourguiba's secular and nationalist regime, indisputably committed to modernization, stimulated opposition among many Muslims. They felt that development was increasingly achieved at the expense of Tunisia's Islamic identity and values and of the privileged position of such traditional Islamic institutions as the ulama and the Zaytouna mosque-university. In the early 1970's, this dissatisfaction with the overwhelming secularization of society and education prompted the emergence of Islamic reform groups like the Quranic Preservation Society. The government's attempt to co-opt and thereby control these organizations was in part successful, but as the economy steadily worsened in the mid to late 1970's, less accommodating and more explicitly political groups such as the Islamic Tendency Movement (Mouvement de Tendance Islamique, MTI) appeared.

Tunisian Muslim activists derived encouragement from the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic republic in Iran and were emboldened to assert their demands. The Bourguiba government, equating the Islamic revolution with extremism, first attempted to malign these activists with the label "Khomeinist" and then arrested and imprisoned their leaders. The government continued its efforts to discredit the Islamic opposition by associating it with Iran, yet there is little evidence to suggest such a close linkage. Moreover, by 1981 Rashid Ghannoushi, leader of the MTI, had modified his support of the revolution and rejected the utility of violence for political change in Tunisia. Thus, though events in Iran confirmed and heightened Islamic-based opposition, they did not lead to outright revolt.

Nigeria:

Nigeria has a long heritage of Islamic presence and activism. During the eighteenth century a series of African Jihad movements led to the establishment of various Islamic states. An Islamic revivalist movement, popularly remembered as the Fulani Jihad, led by the scholar-warrior Uthman Dan-Fodio (1754-1817) created an empire—the Sokoto Caliphate— in northern Nigeria whose memory remains a source of inspiration today.

Nigeria's Muslims are concentrated in the North, and comprise 40% of the 116 million citizens of this most populous African state. Anxious to maintain their Islamic identity, they have often reacted out of fear of political and economic domination by southern Christians.

Since the 1960's, the Nigerian Muslim community has increased its sense of internal solidarity and its identification with the rest of Islam. Many factors have contributed to this trend, including mass communications, Islamic education,

the creation of national Islamic organizations, sizeable participation in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, large numbers of students returning from major Islamic universities like Egypt's Al-Azhar University, and the growing presence and activities of fellow Muslims and Islamic organizations from the Middle East and Asia. Islamic activists are to be found in a host of organizations, such as the Young Muslim Student Association of Nigeria, the Muslim Student Society, and the Society for the Victory of Islam.

Nigerian Muslims embrace a spectrum of positions, as is the case in other Muslim countries. At one extreme one finds the millenarian Maitatsine sect, founded by Muhammad Murawa, which staged violent, bloody uprisings from 1980 to 1984. It was revolting against the acute negative impact on traditional sectors of society that Nigeria's oil boom (1974-83) was producing. A more moderate band on the spectrum is represented by student activists, led by university faculty like the Europeasn-educated Ibrahim Sulaiman, whose message is reminiscent of other Islamic reformers such as Iran's Ali Shariati. They challenge the western orientation of the political and social establishment, regard Islam as an alternative to western capitalism and Soviet Marxism, and demand the implementation of Islamic law. Meanwhile more traditional religious leaders such as Sheikh Abubakr Gumi (former Grand Kadi or chief judge of Northern Nigeria) denounce un-Islamic innovations in society and the corruption of Sufi (mystical) brotherhoods, while calling for a return to the Quran and Sunnah (model example) of the Prophet.

Many Nigerian Muslim leaders were encouraged and inspired by the success and example of the Iranian revolution. They welcomed many of the themes of the Iranian revolution, including condemnation of official corruption, rejection of excessive materialism, denunciation of westernization, and implementation of Islamic law. (Despite their differences, Islamic activists in Nigeria are united in their call for shariah legal and court reforms). The majority of Nigeria's Muslims, however, remain committed to a pluralistic state, rather than to the creation of an Islamic state for their region.

Turkey:

Turkey's population is 98% Muslim, but its official secularism is the ideological opposite of Iran's Islamic Republic. Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) had imposed a series of secular reforms in the 1920's, whereby the caliphate was abolished, the veil and fez were banned, and Arabic during the call to prayer was proscribed and replaced with Turkish. Since the 1950's, however, the secular state has gradually accommodated itself to persistent traditional sentiments, and from the late 1970's a full-scale revival has been underway. This is due in part to the example of the Iranian revolution, but also to local conditions: continuing economic difficulties (inflation running over 75% per annum); the influence of migrant

workers returning home disenchanted with western secular societies; the encouragement of such Saudi financed institutions as the Muslim World League; and the influence of the Prime Minister, Turgut Ozal, who has defended the role of Islam in Turkish society more than any of his predecessors since Ataturk. As a consequence, there are now five times as many religious schools as there were fifteen years ago, accounting for about 40% of total school enrollment; public schools have made religious instruction compulsory since 1982; and in the March 1989 local elections, the pro-Islamic Prosperity Party captured a surprising 10% of the total vote—up from 7.5% in the general election of 1987—and won the mayoral elections in five major cities.

Iran became involved in a controversy over the permissibility of headscarves for women just prior to the 1989 elections. Parliament had passed a law that Ozal had introduced that would allow university students to cover their hair in line with Islamic practice. This was vetoed by the president, however, and the veto was overridden by parliament. When the Supreme Court finally declared the law unconstitutional, protest broke out in several cities. Meanwhile there had been demonstrations of sympathy in Teheran, and the Iranian press had accused Turkey of appeasing western sentiment in its effort to become a member of the European community. The government accused Iran of a "an unaccustomed and bothersome interest" in the scarf issue, recalled its ambassador from Teheran for consultations, and declared that Turkey would never "condone efforts [from any country] to become a party to matters concerning exclusively the Turkish state".[10]

Although this and other evidence suggests a revival of pro-Islamic sentiment in Turkey, it appears unlikely that the country is ripe for an Iranian-style upheaval in the name of Islam.. The army, always the guardian of the Kemalist revolution, remains wary of Islamic activism; the educated middle classes have been thoroughly imbued with the secular goals of the state and are critical of Prime Minister Ozal's sympathy towards Islam in public life; and a 1988 poll shows that only 7% of all Turks wish to see an Islamic system based on the *shariah* established in Turkey.

Soviet Union:

Like all religions in the Soviet Union, Islam has long been under rigorous state control. Nevertheless, in the 1960's Muslims came increasingly to turn to Islamic values and traditions, and informal Islamic schools, institutions, and secret societies developed. When the Iranian revolution occurred, its impact

[10]The Washington Post, April 4, 1989

among Soviet Muslims was enhanced not simply because of prevailing receptivity to Islamic ideas at that time, but because it coincided with the troubled waning years of the Brezhnev era. Political immobilism, economic failures, widespread corruption and deterioration in central control all contributed to the entrenchment of local traditional interests and new informal institutions among many of the more than 50 million Soviet Muslims. The concomitant development of Islamic revivalism in the Muslim world and the explosion of Iranian Islamic sentiment across the border had to have affected both the Muslims and the regime. One indicator of official anxiety was the invasion of Afghanistan.

Both the Iranian revolution and the Gorbachev reforms operated to intensify Muslim demands against the state. Islamic revivalist sentiment was already a significant force, but information and education on Islam significantly increased after the Iranian revolution, especially in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. With *glasnost* came additional demands for the formal reinstitutionalization of Islamic education and ritual practices. Some activists, located in rural areas and centered around Sufi (mystical) brotherhoods, have even turned to violence to advance their goals. But there is no evidence of an Iranian link.

Ironically, an enduring legacy of the Afghan invasion is likely to be the displacement of Shii Iran as exemplar and greater attention to political and religious trends in Sunni-dominated Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it seems probable that Iran will continue to play an important, if somewhat secondary role within Soviet Muslim circles. It is worth noting that in the November 1988 clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Azerbaijani demonstrators prominently displayed posters of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Pakistan:

From its inception in 1947, Pakistan's identity has been intertwined with Islam. Its first constitution proclaimed it an Islamic republic, and ever since, Islam has been a central feature of its political and social development. The 1971 civil war that led to the loss of East Pakistan and its recreation as Bangladesh caused the question of national identity and ideology to become paramount. The socialist policies and secular orientation of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who became president in 1971, did not deter him from recognizing the symbolic power of Islam, and, in the oil era, the potential of attracting Muslim patronage from several Gulf states. Accordingly, he stressed Pakistan's fraternal ties with Muslim countries, hosted a summit conference of world Muslim leaders in 1974, and increased government sponsorship of Islamic activities. These steps, however, did not deter the growth of a formidable opposition (the Pakistan National Alliance), which coalesced under the umbrella of Islam. The instability that ensued

precipitated General Zia ul-Haq's seizure of power in 1977. Quick to legitimate his rule in the name of Islam, he proposed to establish an Islamic system of government (*nizam-i-Islam*). In February 1979, at the very time that Khomeini was making his triumphal return to Iran, Zia formalized this commitment and announced a series of political, social, legal, economic, and educational reforms. Soon thereafter, his government became the first officially to recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Pakistan has a significant Shii minority population, variously estimated at from 15 to 25 percent, which has long had close ties with Iran. As Zia ul-Haq implemented his Islamic order, the Shia began to object to the imposition of Sunni Islamic standards. They argued that while they wanted an Islamic system, they did not want Sunni regulations to supersede Shii laws regarding the levying of the alms tax (*zakat*) and imposition of Quranically prescribed punishments (*hudud*). Iran's revolution, therefore, heightened their self-confidence and assertiveness, leading to an increased number of Shii religious processions, public ritual celebrations, and political demonstrations and organizations.

Although this enhanced Shii identity exacerbated Sunni-Shii tensions, leading at times to violent confrontations, popular perceptions of Iran remained remarkably positive. Thirty-five percent of Pakistani respondents in July 1979 favored Khomeini's regime over that of the Shah; by December 1985, the figure had risen to forty-two percent. In July 1985, in a Gallup poll on the countries which Pakistanis trust most, Iran ranked second behind Saudi Arabia.[11]

While the contours of the Iranian impact on Pakistan, as on other countries, cannot be precisely delineated, it is clear that Iran has indirectly affected and complicated the political fortunes of both the government and its opposition.

Philippines:

The impact of Iran on Muslim politics in the southern Philippines was vividly manifest during the 20th anniversary celebration of Bangsamoro Freedom Day on March 18, 1988. Placards of Nur Misuari, leader of the Moro National Liberation Front, and of the Ayatollah Khomeini were paraded together. Muslims (the Moros) comprise about five million of the Philippine's fifty-five million citizens and are concentrated in the South. Associating the Philippines with Christianity and Christian dominance, they historically did not consider themselves Filipino, and did not participate in the independence movement. They always preferred independence as a Muslim state, and by 1972 they were

[11]Gallup Political Weather Report, February 1986 (Islamabad: Gallup Pakistan, 1986), p. 32 and Gallup Political Weather Report (Islamabad: Gallup Pakistan, 1985), p. 18.

fully engaged in an armed struggle for self-determination and independence against the government of Ferdinand Marcos.

From the early 1970's, the Shah and Marcos had strengthened diplomatic ties. By 1978 more than 2,500 Iranian students were enrolled in Philippine universities and some 6,000 Filipinos labored in Iran. Many Philippine Muslims welcomed the fall of the Shah, regarding it as a manifestation of God's punishment of an un-Islamic ruler and a possible foreshadowing of the fate of Marcos. When 300 Moro students demonstrated near the American embassy on November 30, 1979, they carried posters with such slogans as "Long live Khomeini's Republic," "Unite for Jihad," and "Down with American imperialism." By the end of 1979, religious literature (books, pamphlets, journals) published in English by Iran's Ministry of National Guidance, the Shariati Foundation, and other agencies entered the country and exposed Muslim faculty and students to the writings of Iranian intellectuals and theologians.[12]

A more substantial linkage was forged between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Iran. Leaders of the MNLF, like Islamic activist leaders from other parts of the world, had visited Khomeini shortly after the revolution. Nur Misuari was assured by Khomeini that "the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran would not be complete until the oppressed Bangsamoro Muslims in the southern Philippines won their victory."[13] On October 15, 1979, Ali Akbar Monifar, Iran's Minister of Oil, announced that Iran would "not supply the country with a single drop of oil as long as oppression and massacre of Muslims continue there."[14] Iran extended diplomatic recognition to Misuari and the MNLF's office in Teheran. In contrast to Libya, Saudi Arabia and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which have pressured the MNLF to accept autonomy under the Tripoli Agreement of December 1976, Iran has supported the MNLF's desire for complete independence.

The Philippine government, not surprisingly, looked upon Iranian influence as threatening. The Iranian embassy in Manila was accused of trying to export the revolution by providing financial aid to the MNLF and distributing propaganda materials. Pro-Khomeini Iranian students led demonstrations with local Muslim students against Israeli and American policies in Lebanon and Palestine. Their activities, as well as pitched battles between pro-Khomeini and anti-Khomeini students, led to a crackdown by the government in 1983. An Iranian student publication, *Payam-e-Vahdat* (The Message of Unity), boasted that Iran

[12]Cesar Adib Majul, "The Iranian Revolution and the Muslims of the Philippines", pp. 4-6.

[13]Ibid., p. 12.

[14]Ibid., p. 13.

had produced five million pieces of propaganda material, some of which had spread to the Philippines:

> "These we have distributed among our Filipino brothers in this country and we say that we have awakened them from their slumber. We have succeeded in enlightening and effectively provoking the Filipino masses — Muslims and Christians — to take overt actions against the corrupt regime of prostitutes and dictator...They have learned what we have taught them in the art and science of revolution and can proudly say now that they have underground movements patterned after the one we started in Iran."[15]

The reality is more complex. On the one hand, despite the hyperbole of these Iranian students, the Muslims of the Philippines have had a long-established independence movement, receiving aid from many Muslim countries. On the other hand, the example that the Iranian revolution has fostered, the religio-political propaganda that it has distributed, the official support that it has extended to the MNLF, and the activism of pro-Khomeini Iranian students in the Philippines that it has encouraged, have made the Ayatollah Khomeini, for many Moros, the arch-representative of political opposition in the name of Islam. This has enabled Iran within a relatively short period of time to win the admiration of MNLF leaders and to enjoy popular support in many Muslim households in the southern Philippines where his picture is prominently displayed.

Indonesia:

As noted previously, in some countries governments have invoked the specter of an extremist Iran, intolerant and in turmoil, to combat the opposition's efforts to project itself as the harbinger of a successful Islamic revolution, thereby attempting to delegitimize that opposition. Tunisia under Bourguiba provided one example. Indonesia provides another.

The Indonesian government has constantly warned of the dangers of "deviant Islam," often attributed to Libya and Iran. In a number of instances, the Suharto government has accused opposition groups of Iranian backing and anti-government activities. Iran was thought to be behind one group, the Islamic Revolution Board; the mere fact that one editor wrote a column under the title of "The Advice of Ayatollah Khomeini" was sufficient to merit the charge that he was

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[15]Ibid., p. 31.

engaged in the "stirring-up of Islamic revolution" and earn for him a thirteen year sentence. The Minister of Religious Affairs underscored the image of a pernicious Iran by explicitly juxtaposing the false practice of Islam that it preaches with "true Islam": "Although the extremist movement [in Indonesia] became stronger since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Muslims generally do not favor the militant approach."[16]

Global Impact of the Revolution— The Rushdie Affair

The furor over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* has now become an international event. The book has been condemned and burned by Muslims in many parts of the world. Orderly demonstrations and protest have been overshadowed by crowds in the streets of Teheran calling for the death of the author, a demonstration in front of the American Center in Islamabad, Pakistan on February 12, 1989, which cost the lives of at least five Pakistanis, and riots and threats against the publishers and bookstores in Britain and the United States. The turmoil surrounding the book has led to a cooling of relations between Iran and the West as European nations have condemned the Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the execution of Rushdie and, as of February 20, 1989, withdrawn diplomats from Iran.

Muslims are offended by passages in the book which question the authenticity of the Quran (The Satanic Verses, p. 367), ridicule the Prophet and the contents of the Quran (pp. 363- 64), and to refer to Muhammad as Mahound — a term used in the past by Christian authors to vilify Muhammed (p. 381). The book also has prostitutes assuming the identity and names of Muhammad's wives, and the very Quranic symbol for their seclusion and protection, "The Curtain," is transformed into the image of a brothel, which men circumambulate as worshipers do the sacred shrine (Kaaba) during the pilgrimage to Mecca (p. 381).

Muslim responses have varied. Most have denounced the book as an attack upon Islam and condemned the author for blasphemy and apostasy. Many Muslims in the Muslim world and the West have sought to have it banned. The secretary-general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) urged all 46 member nations to ban the book and boycott the publishers. Many Muslim countries, as well as India and Singapore, which have significant Muslim minorities, have in fact banned the book. Egypt had quietly done so in November 1988. The Egyptian Nobel laureate, Naguib Mahfouz, a strong

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[16]Berita Harian, October 1, 1987, as cited in von der Mehden, p. 15. .

proponent of freedom of expression, publicly backed Egypt's ban, stating that "different cultures have different attitudes towards freedom of speech. What might be endured in western cultures might not be acceptable in Muslim countries".

On February 14, 1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* (religious decree or legal opinion) which condemned Rushdie, who was born a Muslim but left the faith, to death and called for his execution. The Mufti of Sokoto (Nigeria) also called for Rushdie's death. In contrast, religious scholars at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, the oldest university in the world and a venerable center of Islamic learning, stated that according to Islamic law, Rushdie must first have a trial and be given an opportunity to repent.[17]

The Rushdie affair has had important policy implications. In the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq cease-fire in August 1988, Iran had taken a number of steps to expand its international relations and improve its image. Diplomatic and trade relations with Europe had been strengthened. In an effort to improve its image in general and the perception of its human rights policy in particular, the Iranian government had hosted and participated in a number of conferences which included Europeans and Americans. The Ayatollah even sent a personal message to the Soviet leader, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, exhorting him to look to Islam instead of Marxism for a solution to his country's problems. However, the more hardline, anti-western faction was able to use the Rushdie affair to interrupt this turn towards normalization of relations with the West. It found the right button to press in motivating Khomeini to respond as Iran's supreme religio-political leader. Thus, he condemned the book and the author, denounced "the devilish acts of the West," and approved Iran's severance of diplomatic relations with Britain. Despite Iran's revolutionary slogan of "Neither West nor East," the move away from the West has coincided with Iran's new posture towards the Soviet Union. Khomeini met with Soviet Foreign Minister Edward A. Shevardnadze, on February 26, 1989 in what both sides declared was a major step towards closer ties.

The memories of the American embassy hostages in Iran, the burning down of the American embassy in Pakistan in 1979, attacks against Americans in Lebanon and other countries in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, and the recent riot outside the American Center in Islamabad are vivid reminders of the pitfalls in relations between the United States and militant activists. The Rushdie affair is an example of the need for governments to act judiciously and to proceed cautiously. In contrast to European governments, the American

[17] "Repeating an Apostasy Is An Apostasy: Religious Leaders Urge Muslims to Ignore Rushdie Issue," Middle East Times, Vol. VII, No. 10 7-13 March, 1989), p. 14.

administration has indeed responded more slowly and carefully. It has chosen to distance itself from the book (Vice President Quayle described it as offensive) while affirming the right of free speech and rejecting Khomeini's call for the assassination of the author. Going even further, acknowledgment of the offensiveness of *The Satanic Verses* to Muslims might well have been accompanied by a recognition — however much it runs against the grain — that the limits of free speech may vary depending upon the religio-cultural context.

Perhaps one of the lessons to be learned from the Rushdie affair, therefore, is that government analysts and policy-makers cannot afford to be insensitive to profound differences in world views and values. The West's secular orientation can blind them to the "reality" to which many Muslims react. But it would be equally unfortunate if decision makers lost sight of the complexity of Islam, of the multiple voices and the diversity of motives that exist in the Muslim community and Muslim politics. The Ayatollah is not the sole spokesman of Islam, nor would it be useful to place all Islamic issues within the memory and emotions of the past decade's contentious relationship with Iran. Certainly, for many Muslims, the Rushdie affair is primarily a religious matter. Yet, for others in countries like Iran and Pakistan, religious outrage is often conveniently wedded to domestic politics, such as elite factionalism in Iran or anti-Benazir Bhutto sentiments in Pakistan. Both insensitivity to cultural differences and a lack of appreciation for political nuances within another political environment can limit the ability of decision makers to respond appropriately and effectively in pressured situations.

Policy Perspectives

The picture we have painted is of a complex, multi-dimensional revolution that is neither as ideologically fixed and persistently menacing as its critics hold, nor as chaotic and benign as its defenders believe. It is difficult to maintain such a complex, nuanced view because of the baggage of the recent past — the seizure of the American embassy in Teheran in November 1979 and the release of the hostages only in January 1981; the support for bombings, hijackings, and other acts of violence in the Middle East; the virulent anti-western propaganda; and, more recently, the political impact of the Salman Rushdie affair.

Indeed, American decision makers have almost uniformly viewed Iran in hostile terms. Yet no one can deny the long-term congruent interests of the United States and Iran. Iran has obvious strategic importance because of its size (by the turn of the century, its population will be twice that of the Gulf states), oil and gas wealth, proximity to the Soviet Union, and domination of the vital Strait of Hormuz. In light of these factors, Iran has the ability to affect Gulf regional stability and, by extension, U.S. interests. The United States can ill afford to

have an Iranian spoiler in the Gulf. An isolated Iran is a dangerous Iran. Despite the fact that the Rushdie affair has temporarily reversed Iran's movement towards normalization with the West, American influence upon Iranian international conduct is dependent upon the maintenance of regular contacts with Iran over the long run.

In addition, Iran has assumed renewed geostrategic importance, now that a cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war has come into effect, because it can serve as a counterweight to Iraq. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states face an Iraq which regards itself as the principal regional, if not Arab, state and possesses a large and experienced military. While it suffered tremendous losses and must undergo a difficult period of reconstruction, it has already shown its willingness to pursue an activist, perhaps even aggressive, foreign policy in the Middle East. In response to this, the GCC members, which had once bankrolled the Iraqi war effort but were careful not to burn all their bridges with Iran, are increasingly wary of Iraqi intentions and, as a consequence, are open to an improved relationship with Iran. They have not forgotten persistent Iraqi claims to Kuwait, or at least to its islands, nor Iraq's use of chemical weapons in the war and against parts of its own population. Historically, the Gulf amirs feared an Iran intent upon exporting its revolution, yet the larger historical record shows that they are capable of living with a dominant Iran. The changed political environment makes Iran less threatening, even as Iraq seems more threatening, and therefore renders improved relations with Iran the key to regional stability. American policy, which is predicated upon such stability and close ties with the GCC, cannot afford to be indifferent to this new environment.

As for Iran, its long-term interests too lie in improved relations with the United States. Like it or not, the United States plays a dominant role in the international system within which Iran must function. Although Iran has a European option in reconstructing its economy and military, the United States possesses advantages in both areas that cannot be ignored. As the Iranians survey their regional environment as well, concern with Iraq on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other is inevitable. It would be prudent for an Iranian state concerned about Iraqi designs to be attentive to the dangers of American preferential support for Iraq. Similarly, the United States could provide a political counterbalance to the Russian bear to the north, which twice in this century has occupied Iranian territory.

Despite these long-term interests, it must be said that the short-term policy options are limited. The Iranian negative image of the United States has been reaffirmed by a series of events: the attack on the U.S.S. Stark in May 1987, which, though launched by the Iraqis, was blamed on the adverse environment created by the Iranians; American naval engagements with Iranian forces in

October 1987; the shooting down of an Iranian civilian airliner in July 1988 by the U.S.S. Vincennes; and President Reagan's renewal of the economic embargo against Iran in November 1988. For the United States, which has regarded Iran as its nemesis since 1979, the Iran-Contra Affair in particular has left a legacy of mistrust of an excessively factionalized Iranian government and an abiding suspicion that normal relations are impossible. As Secretary of State George Shultz memorably said, "Our guys...got taken to the cleaners."[18] The Rushdie affair, which has prompted widespread unrest in the Islamic world as a result in part of Khomeini's pronouncement of a death sentence on the author of *The Satanic Verses*, has reinforced the public image of an intolerant Islam and a vindictive Iran. The Bush administration has supported the decision of the European Community to withdraw diplomatic representation from Teheran as a result of this affair.

Yet, with the passing of Khomeini, new options may arise, and we should not lose sight of the pragmatic streak that was emerging in Iran in the past few years. Time after time, the Iranian government has had to adjust its plans for the reform of the economy, the export of the revolution abroad, and the conduct of the war with Iraq. Ideology, though still vehemently defended by significant leaders and groups, has increasingly receded. Even Hussein Musavi-Khamenei, the prime minister, who favors a centrally planned economy and has criticized foreign domination of the Iranian economy in the past, suggested in 1988 that Iran might turn to outside sources for loans and expertise.[19] At the same time, leaders such as Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign minister, were instrumental in bringing the war to an end and, until the Rushdie affair, in repairing relations with European countries. Perhaps the strongest indicator of the triumph of state interests over Islamic ideology is Khomeini's categorical statement, during an extraordinary exchange with the president of the republic in January and February 1988, that "The government is empowered to unilaterally revoke any Shari'ah [Islamic law] agreements which it has concluded with the people when those agreements are contrary to the interests of the country or of Islam."[20] The ascent to power of Rafsanjani and Khamenei in the wake of Khomeini's death may provide new opportunities.

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[18]Secretary of State George P. Shultz, testifying at the Joint House-Senate Iran-Contra Investigation Hearings, July 23, 1987, as cited in Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair, 100th Congress, 1st Session, November 13, 1987 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 245.

[19]Fouad Ajami, "Iran: The Impossible Revolution," Foreign Affairs (Winter 1988/89), p. 147.

[20]Ayatollah Khomeini's letter to President Seyyed Ali Khamenei, broadcast on Teheran Home Service, January 7, 1988, as reported in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, ME/0043 (January 8, 1988), p. A7.

There is yet another dimension to the Iranian revolution, as viewed from the perspective of US policy: the issue of the future relationship between America and Islam as a whole. As we have seen, responses in the Muslim world to Iran's revolution have varied across a wide spectrum, demonstrating the principle that Islam has multiple voices. But given the pervasive force of Islamic revivalism, and Iran's status as a principal champion of that cause, America's responses to Iran will affect not only US-Iranian bilateral interests, but also, and more importantly, perceptions of the United States throughout much of the Islamic world. The people whose attitudes will be affected include the moderate majority of Islamic activists who today constitute a part of the political mainstream in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, the Sudan, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Malaysia.

The vast majority of Islamic organizations and movements do not espouse violent revolution, but rather seek to bring about sociopolitical change within their established governmental systems, wherever possible. This is exemplified by the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) in Tunisia, the Muslim Brotherhood in the Sudan, and the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement (ABIM). They run clinics and schools, day-care and social centers, banks and legal aid societies. They participate in parliamentary elections; their members work in the bureaucracy, and have served in the cabinets in countries like the Sudan, Pakistan, and Malaysia. Such Muslims, like many others in the developing world, are wary and sometimes critical of the United States (as well as Europe and the Soviet Union), but they are not necessarily anti-American.

As policymakers look to the future of the U.S.-Iranian relationship, very little is certain. What is indisputable is that contacts and exchanges between two antagonists, however indirect, are more likely to lead to an improvement of relations than would no contacts at all. Intensifying these contacts and keeping the lines of communication open — if only through U.S. allies — seem warranted by the pragmatic trend that until recently was ascendant within the Iranian government and by the new regional environment that has resulted from the cease-fire in the Gulf war.

In grappling with the diplomatic details of how to effect a real American-Iranian rapprochement, American officials would be well-advised to keep the big picture in mind, a picture that belies the simplicity of stereotypes and myths. No one can deny that bad blood has characterized the relationship, nor that a new era has been consistently elusive. Emotionalism and mythologizing are all too understandable, but are luxuries which a great power can ill afford.

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